United Nations E/2003/4

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
31 December 2002

Original: English

Substantive session of 2003
Geneva, 30 June-25 July 2003
Item 13 (k) of the provisional agenda
Economic and environmental questions: cartography

Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

Report of the Secretary-General

Introduction

1. The Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, convened in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2000/230 of 26 July 2000, was held at the Conference Centre of the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany in Berlin from 27 August to 5 September 2002. The Conference was attended by 282 representatives and observers from 88 countries,[1] 2 specialized agencies,[2] 1 intergovernmental organization[3] and 4 international scientific organizations.[4]

2. The provisional agenda of the Conference had been prepared by the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (New York, January 1997). The Conference considered the reports of Governments and linguistic/geographical divisions on the situation in their countries and regions and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Seventh Conference. It established three technical committees to deal with a range of specific issues pertinent to national standardization of geographical names, toponymic databases, terminology, romanization systems, and toponymic education and practice, as defined by an agenda item of the Conference.

3. The Conference adopted 16 resolutions and a vote of thanks. The resolutions reflected the concerns on issues regarding the standardization of geographical names expressed in plenary sessions and in the three technical committees of the Conference. The proceedings of the Conference will be published in one volume, containing the report of the Conference and the resolutions adopted. The technical papers submitted to the Conference were distributed to the participants, and most of them, as well as the report of the Conference, will be published through the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) web site, developed and maintained by United Nations Statistics Division.

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I. Findings of the Conference

4. The Conference reviewed the status of the resolutions of the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and acknowledged the establishment of the recently created web site of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. The Conference recognized the importance of continuing the development of national programmes on standardization of geographical names, of creating toponymic data files, geographical names gazetteers and databases, and of harnessing information obtainable from the increasing number of toponymic web sites. In addition, the Conference reviewed developments on romanization systems, training courses in toponymy, and cooperation with national and international agencies and bodies. The Conference, encouraged by these achievements, stressed the need to continue national standardization, and toponymic education and practice, as well as the development of romanization systems.

5. Country reports were presented to plenary sessions of the Conference: 55 were filed in written form[5] and 2 were verbal reports.[6] Major trends, according to the reports, have included: (a) the increased number of national names authorities established since the last Conference; (b) the ongoing review of principal policies, procedures, and organizational and institutional issues relating to standardization of geographical names; and (c) the achievements that extend beyond traditional gazetteers and atlases to include digital gazetteers, geographic information system (GIS)-based databases, and web sites.

6. The Conference, through the work of Committee I on national programmes, presented and discussed aspects of national standardization in different countries, including field collection and office treatment of names, treatment of names in multilingual areas, the administrative structure of national names authorities and toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors. The Conference recommended that Governments expand their existing data-collection procedures for geographical names and establish procedures for collecting names from all acceptable sources in order to better answer the needs of geographical names users (resolution 10). The Conference also discussed the work on exonyms and, noting that in several countries there had been a tendency to increase the number of exonyms, adopted some measures that would help in the reduction of the use of exonyms (resolution 4). The Conference noted the significance of geographical names in the preservation of the cultures of minority and indigenous groups and the active work being undertaken in recording, recognizing and promoting such toponyms. It recommended that a world summary of such activities be prepared (resolution 1). Having recognized the potential difficulties and lack of general direction in respect of naming a geographical feature in order to commemorate a living or recently deceased person, the Conference recommended that national guidelines address this issue (resolution 2).

7. The Conference, through the work of Committee II on technical programmes, acknowledged the progress made during the past four years towards the creation of toponymic data files, gazetteers and web sites. The benefits and challenges of distributing data through the increasing number of toponymic web sites were discussed. In addition, the Conference reviewed cooperation with national and international agencies and bodies, noting the liaisons established with International Organization for Standardization Technical Committee 211 (ISO/TC 211) and the

Unicode Consortium and emphasized the need to promote toponymic data exchange formats and standards (resolution 7). The Conference recommended the continued organization of joint meetings of the linguistic/geographical divisions and the working groups of UNGEGN to address substantively regional needs in the areas of toponymic training, data files and gazetteers, romanization systems, publicity and funding, and terminology (resolution 5).

8. International programmes and exchanges were issues covered by the work of Committee III. The Committee discussed aspects of those issues relevant to pronunciation of geographical names, terminology, geographical features common to two or more nations, romanization systems, country names, toponymic education and practice, and international cooperation. The Conference recognized the importance of reflecting the correct pronunciation of a geographical name and recommended that guides on this be developed, particularly for a digital environment. In addition, the establishment of a working group of UNGEGN was recommended inasmuch as it could be beneficial and of potential assistance in the overall reduction of exonyms (resolution 11). The Conference took note of the newly published *Glossary of Terms Used in the Standardization of Geographical Names* and recommended that additions and amendments continue to be reviewed (resolution 3). The Conference underlined the continuing importance of romanization systems and was pleased to endorse modifications for romanization of Thai (resolution 13) and the formal use of "Serbian Cyrillic" in documentation (resolution 14). Furthermore, the Conference recognized the ongoing need for cooperation between UNGEGN and the Terminology and Reference Section of the United Nations Secretariat with regard to names of countries (resolution 15).

9. Presentations from international scientific organizations highlighted the significant developments and advances in standardization, digital mapping and other technology associated with geo-information, in particular their involvement and contributions in support of aspects of geographical names standardization. The international standardization body, ISO/TC 211 presented its current achievements in spatial standards, aimed not at standardizing geographical names, but at providing models for gazetteers, metadata, quality descriptions, terminology etc. The report of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) highlighted two aspects of the work, namely, the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) Subcommittee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN) and the new edition of special publication S-23 entitled "Limits of Oceans and Seas". The work of the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) was detailed, including a 2001 issue of the Council's journal *Onoma* dedicated to the topic "Aspects of Names Standardization".

10. The deliberations of the three Conference Committees confirmed that the concept of geographical names as constituting part of a nation's cultural and historical heritage is gaining recognition, and encouraged member States to intensify both the systematic collection of geographical names and their dissemination to the public at large including the local usage of name forms (resolution 9). The Conference, noting the identification of standardized geographical names information as a crucial and fundamental component of the spatial data infrastructure by the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group (UNGIWG), recommended that UNGEGN, through its working groups and divisions, actively facilitate the provision of standardized geographical names information from appropriate national authorities to UNGIWG (resolution 8). A

challenge for the geographical names community in each country is how to strengthen cooperation with cartographers and other users in order to make geographical names a component of the national spatial data infrastructure (resolution 6). Noting the need for training and publication materials, the Conference requested the assistance of the United Nations Statistics Division in this regard (resolution 15).

11. A list of the 17 resolutions adopted by the Eighth Conference and the proposed provisional agenda for the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names are attached in annexes I and II, respectively. The activities recommended by the Conference and those required for the preparation of the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, deemed to be of a continuing nature, have been included in the medium-term plan under programme 7, subprogramme 7, for the period 2002-2005, and it is anticipated that they will be incorporated into the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005. Inclusion of these activities is not expected to give rise to additional expenditures. In the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, those activities that are of a continuing nature fall under section 9 (Economic and social affairs).

II. Recommendations to the Council

12. In view of the continuing important contributions made by standardized geographical names, toponymic data files and gazetteers to the work of decision makers, cartographers, linguists, planners and the public at large, and the essential contribution that the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names were continuing to make to the work of member States in the geographical information field and related cartographic areas, the Conference recommended that the Council:

(a) Endorse its recommendation that the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names should be convened for eight working days in the second half of 2007;

(b) Also endorse its recommendation that the twenty-second session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names should be convened in 2004;

(c) Request the Secretary-General to take measures, where appropriate and within available resources, to implement the other recommendations made by the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, especially with regard to the work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

Notes

[1] Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Paraguay, Peru,

Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Holy See.

[2] International Maritime Organization, World Bank.

[3] Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH).

[4] International Cartographic Association (ICA), International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), Names Society of Southern Africa.

[5] Submitted by: Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malaysia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yugoslavia.

[6] Presented by: Myanmar, Sudan.

Annex I

List of resolutions adopted by the Eighth Conference

1. Promotion of minority group and indigenous geographical names
2. Commemorative naming practices for geographical features
3. United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) Working Group on Terminology
4. United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) Working Group on Exonyms
5. Joint meetings: United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) linguistic/geographical divisions and working groups
6. Integration of geographical names data into national and regional spatial data infrastructures
7. Toponymic data exchange formats and standards
8. Assistance to the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group (UNGIWG)
9. Geographical names as cultural heritage
10. Toponymic data-collection procedures
11. Working group on the pronunciation of geographical names
12. Standardization of names of countries
13. Romanization of Thai geographical names
14. Romanization of Serbian Cyrillic
15. Support for training and publications
16. Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the twenty-second session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names
17. Vote of thanks

Annex II

Provisional agenda for the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

1. Opening of the Conference.
2. Election of the President of the Conference.
3. Organizational matters:
   (a) Adoption of the rules of procedure;
   (b) Adoption of the agenda;
   (c) Election of officers other than the President;
   (d) Organization of work;
   (e) Credentials of representatives to the Conference.
4. Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Eighth Conference.
5. Reports by divisions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on the situation in their division and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names since the Eighth Conference.
6. Meetings and conferences:
   (a) United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names;
   (b) Divisional and interdivisional meetings and programmes;
   (c) National names meetings, conferences and symposiums;
   (d) International names meetings, conferences and symposiums.
7. Measures taken and proposed to implement United Nations resolutions on the standardization of geographical names.
8. Economic and social benefits of the national and international standardization of geographical names.
9. National standardization:
   (a) Field collection of names;
   (b) Office treatment of names;
   (c) Treatment of names in multilingual areas;
   (d) Administrative structure of national names authorities;
   (e) Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors.
10. Exonyms.
11. Reports on programmes to assist with the pronunciation of names.

12. Toponymic data files:
    (a) Data-collection procedures;
    (b) Data elements required;
    (c) Toponymic data transfer standards and formats;
    (d) Automated data-processing (ADP) systems;
    (e) Compatibility and structure of systems;
    (f) National gazetteers;
    (g) Other publications.
13. Toponymic web sites.
14. Terminology in the standardization of geographical names.
15. Features beyond a single sovereignty:
    (a) Policies, procedures and cooperative arrangements;
    (b) Features common to two or more nations.
16. Writing systems:
    (a) Romanization;
    (b) Conversion into non-Roman writing systems;
    (c) Writing of names in unwritten languages.
17. Toponymic education and practice and international cooperation:
    (a) Existing education and practice;
    (b) Training courses in toponymy;
    (c) Exchange of advice and information;
    (d) Exchange of personnel;
    (e) Technical assistance;
    (f) Cooperation with national organizations;
    (g) Cooperation with international organizations;
    (h) Cooperation with public information media.
18. Country names.
19. Arrangements for the Tenth Conference.
20. Adoption of resolutions drafted during the Conference.
21. Adoption of the report of the Conference.
22. Closing of the Conference.

United Nations A/58/61–E/2003/5

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 December 2002

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session
Agenda item 98
Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 2003
Social and human rights questions: social development

Review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons*

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 56/115 of 19 December 2001 and 52/82 of 12 December 1997, presents the results of the fourth five-year review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The report has three objectives: (a) to report on progress in implementation of Assembly resolution 56/115, (b) to review and assess trends in policies and programmes from the disability perspective since the last review, which was considered by the Assembly at its fifty-second session, and (c) to submit recommendations for the further implementation of the goals of the World Programme of Action: full participation of persons with disabilities in social life and development, and equality. A basic conclusion of the review is the strong commitment of Governments to the equalization of opportunities and to the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of development. Differences in emphasis and approach are reported, but commitment is widespread. The advancement of persons with disabilities in a broad human rights framework will require fresh thinking and approaches based on "next" practices that contribute to purposeful action and

* The report is being submitted after the deadline established for consideration at the forty-first session of the Commission for Social Development due to the fact that part of its content responds to resolution 57/229, which was adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2002. It also contains responses from States as at 12 December 2002, the deadline set in the note verbale on the subject dated 13 September 2002.

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concrete results in the equalization of opportunities. Recommendations are submitted on (a) policy options to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of development, (b) substantive aspects of mainstream approaches to the equalization of opportunities and (c) improved coordination of activities of the United Nations system to promote the advancement of persons with disabilities in the context of development.

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–2	3
II.	Progress in implementation	3–14	3
	A. Strategic framework	5	4
	B. Recommendations	6–14	6
Annex			
	Overview of recent policy and programme activities		11

I. Introduction

1. The present report presents the results of the fourth five-year review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/37/351/Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, annex, section VIII, recommendation I (IV)), adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/52 of 3 December 1982. The report is submitted pursuant to Assembly resolutions 56/115 of 19 December 2001 and 52/82 of 12 December 1997, by which the Assembly decided that the next review and appraisal, in 2002, should consider key social and economic policy issues related to equalization of opportunities, in particular (a) accessibility, (b) social services and safety nets and (c) employment and sustainable livelihoods.

2. The current review has three objectives: (a) to report on progress in implementing General Assembly resolution 56/115, (b) to review and assess trends in policies and programmes from the disability perspective since the last review and (c) to submit recommendations to further implement the goals of the World Programme of Action: full participation of persons with disabilities in social life and development, and equality. The report presents conclusions and recommendations for action for consideration by the Assembly. The annex to the report provides an overview of recent policy and programme activities of Governments, international organizations, the United Nations system and the non-governmental community to promote the full participation and equality of persons with disabilities.

II. Progress in implementation

3. Available data suggest widespread support for the goals and objectives of the World Programme of Action and for the guidance provided by the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities[1] for disability-sensitive policy design, planning, evaluation and drafting of national legislation. However, Governments have yet to pronounce themselves on the proposed supplement to the Standard Rules, contained in the annex to the third monitoring report of the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development (see E/CN.5/2002/4). In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2002/26 of 24 July 2002, views of Governments on the proposed supplement will be considered at the forty-second session of the Commission for Social Development, in 2004.

4. The present report considers progress in terms of instruments, structures and capacities that are in place to further the equalization of opportunities by, for and with persons with disabilities. An important development during the period under review is the proposal made by Mexico to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session for a comprehensive and integral convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. The quantitative basis for the evaluation of progress has improved during the period under review in terms of methods and availability of data on disability, but variations still exist with regard to concepts and terminology of disability, so that cross-country comparisons are not possible. The monitoring reports submitted by the Special Rapporteur on Disability (see A/52/56, E/CN.5/2000/3 and E/CN.5/2002/4) have been recognized as important and valuable contributions to policy dialogue. The Special Rapporteur also submitted proposals for better correspondence between the monitoring of the Standard Rules, normally at

three-year intervals, and the quinquennial reviews of progress in implementing the World Programme.

A. Strategic framework

5. The overall conclusion of the present review and appraisal is the strong commitment by Governments to equalization of opportunities and to the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities in the context of development. Differences in emphasis and approach are inevitable, but the basic commitment is widespread. This does not suggest that such a continuation of efforts is a sufficient response. The challenges of development indicate the need to address the advancement of persons with disabilities in a broad human rights framework in terms of "next" — not best — practices: positive action and concrete results are the operational imperatives. Recommendations for further action are developed with reference to the following strategic framework:

(a) The disability perspective is an essential prerequisite for the successful design and implementation of sustainable, rights-based approaches to development. The large and increasing number of persons with disabilities in society makes the issue a key component of programme design, implementation and monitoring. If development programmes do not consider how all persons in society will access their structural components, they are most likely doomed to failure. Human rights for all cannot be advanced without consideration of individual needs and interests from a disability or functional perspective.

(b) The disability perspective requires consideration of policies and programmes based on the inclusive principles embodied in universal design. A key component of universal design is to embrace and honour diversity. By considering the needs of all and promoting the positive functioning of all people, universally designed policies and programmes produce benefits that not only exceed the functional needs of persons traditionally classified as disabled but also extend those benefits to society as a whole. However, the promotion of universally designed policy options and programmes should not undermine efforts to provide reasonable accommodation where it is not practical to redesign elements of society for the positive functioning of all. Nor does the promotion of universal design deny that differences exist between people, which should be recognized and accommodated.

(c) Application of the disability perspective also requires reconsideration of the population to be served so that it includes the various domains of the new universe of disability. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health[2] has taken a universal approach to describing phenomena related to disability. Disablement is viewed as a dynamic interaction between health conditions and other personal factors (age, sex, level of education) as well as social and physical environmental factors. The new usage of disability as an umbrella term reflects growing recognition that the search for a comprehensive definition for disability to identify a truly disabled population is probably fruitless. In a narrow sense, the concept of the new universe of disability expands the population with disabilities to include persons with various conditions such as HIV/AIDS and attention deficit disorder. In a broader sense, the concept recognizes the applicability of disability concerns to persons marginalized on the basis of gender, race, poverty,

aboriginal status or a variety of other factors. Equalization of opportunity becomes, thus, a goal for all people.

(d) The successful formulation and implementation of universally designed policies and programmes for all persons requires a systematic, specific consideration of accessibility issues. As the disability perspective with a universal design is a prerequisite for human rights and development, systematic consideration of accessibility is an essential prerequisite for achieving the goals and objectives of the World Programme of Action and the target areas for equal participation of the Standard Rules.[3] Systematic appraisal of access to societal institutions directs special attention to both conditions and circumstances by which all people exercise their human rights. Such an appraisal would contribute to sustainable and equitable economic and social development for all.

(e) To ensure environmental accessibility, institutions, services and development activities must be focused on where people live. In many countries the majority of the population continues to reside in rural areas, where services for all are often scarce. A large part of the rural population consists of older persons, many of whom are older women who live alone as the surviving head of a household. Consideration of rural issues is of critical importance for persons with disabilities. Of special importance is the association between poverty and disability, which needs to be addressed with reference to a territorial development framework. Moreover, efficiency considerations suggest that the time required to plan and implement public programmes and services is better used by incorporating accessibility considerations as a key design parameter at the outset of the planning process rather than as a subsequent accommodation. Approaches to the provision of services based on expedient solutions are rarely sustainable or cost-effective, or contribute to balanced national development. The successful promotion of sustainable livelihoods for people with disabilities involves their full and effective participation and increased access to social and economic opportunities.

(f) A holistic approach is required to relate disability to human rights and dignity, technological advances and development initiatives. Certain of the building blocks of this holistic approach are based on the parts of the Standard Rules in which the focus is on moving from accessibility (rule 5) to education (rule 6) and employment (rule 7), using universally designed policies and programmes. Enhancing educational and employment opportunities for all through environmental accessibility provides a basis for sustained and equitable social and economic development. That is the logic underlying the proposition that disability is not an isolated state but an experience that all may experience as part of the normal life experience. This represents an important shift in the disability paradigm. Technology has an important role to play in the process of social and economic development. In particular, technologies associated with genetics and biomedical developments raise policy, legislative and ethical questions. Views have been expressed on the need to monitor genetic and biomedical developments to ensure that technological and scientific advances do not undermine the human rights of the individual. In a general sense, the monitoring of global policies and programmes related to the advancement of persons with disabilities that focus on participation, functioning and accessibility would lead to better targeting of resources to further the World Programme of Action goals of full participation and equality.

B. Recommendations

6. With the adoption of the Standard Rules by the General Assembly in resolution 48/96 of 20 December 1993, the initial frame of reference for policies and programmes was equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. As the disability paradigm has evolved, attention has focused on the contribution of the Standard Rules in promoting equalization of opportunities for all persons, based on the principle of universality. There is growing recognition that the empowered participation of persons with disabilities is required to bring about the World Programme of Action goals of full participation and equality. Empowerment requires that persons with disabilities not merely be members of advisory bodies and committees but be able to exercise control over decisions that have an impact on their lives and contribute to public dialogue on policies and programmes that are affected by those decisions. Equalization of opportunities by persons with disabilities requires that people with disabilities have access to, and opportunities to be placed in, positions to set and implement disability-sensitive policy. Equalization of opportunities with persons with disabilities requires that people with disabilities be recognized as partners in the formulation and implementation of development policies and programmes in a broad human rights framework. These are aspirations of all persons and have influenced the formulation of this set of recommendations on equalization of opportunities.

7. Recommendations are submitted on actions related to policy options to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of development; substantive aspects of mainstream approaches to equalization of opportunities; and improved coordination of activities of the United Nations system.

1. Progress on the elaboration of a comprehensive and integrated international instrument on the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of development

8. The initiative of Mexico on the elaboration of a comprehensive and integral convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/168 of 19 December 2001, was presented in the context of the global development agenda to ensure that all citizens have opportunities to be stakeholders in the creation and distribution of development.

9. Because of the link to global development, the proposed comprehensive and integral convention differs from other international human rights instruments. **A major issue in the elaboration of the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities would be to identify options to bring the disability perspective into international development instruments, such as the Millennium development goals, that do not address specifically the situation of persons with disabilities, and to provide thereby a normative basis for the advancement of current and future generations of persons with disabilities in the context of development.**

10. Since disability is a condition that can affect all and can be influenced by a range of environmental variables, the aim of a comprehensive and integral convention is to provide a framework of options to address the condition of disability, its consequences and actions to promote and protect the rights of persons with a disability. These conditions are not covered in a comprehensive and integrated manner in the existing international instruments. **Elaboration of the**

convention should be framed with reference to the global development ethics and standards, such as the determination stated in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". The convention process would also need to consider an appropriate definition of disability, which would include members of the new universe of disability, thereby promoting and protecting the rights of all persons with a disability.

2. Policy priorities for action on equalization of opportunities in the context of development

11. At its fifty-second session, in paragraph 4 of its resolution 52/82 of 12 December 1997, the General Assembly identified three priorities for action to further the equalization of opportunities: accessibility, social services and safety nets, and employment and livelihoods. Available data suggest the continued relevance of these priorities to further the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. **The Ad Hoc Committee established pursuant to Assembly resolution 56/168 may, in this regard, wish to include consideration of these priorities in its work**.

(a) *Accessibility*. The first session of the Ad Hoc Committee directed special emphasis to the question of accessibility, with reasonable accommodation, to facilities and documentation of the United Nations. **The Ad Hoc Committee may wish to consider the dimension of environmental accessibility in its work. The rapid pace of technological change makes environmental accessibility a complex question, and an area in which analyses may result in the identification of technology issues for which there is little or no appropriate policy, legislative or ethical guidance. The Ad Hoc Committee may wish to invite interested parties and experts from countries to provide relevant input**.

(b) *Social services and safety nets*. Several of the Millennium development goals are relevant to the promotion of social services and safety nets to further the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities, especially in connection with the Standard Rules, such as in relation to the priority goal of poverty eradication; the goal of promoting universal primary education; the goals of reducing child mortality and improving maternal health status and the goal of combating HIV/AIDS, which is part of the new universe of disability. **The Ad Hoc Committee may wish to consider possible ways in which the situation of persons with disabilities can benefit from various support measures identified for the implementation of the Millennium development goals by 2015 on the basis of equality with non-disabled populations**.

(c) *Employment and sustainable livelihoods*. Employment is a key component of the World Programme of Action and the Standard Rules. Employment policies and programmes should be disability-sensitive and promote equalization of opportunities with reference to the non-disabled, to skills development training, to technical and extension services, to market information and to development incentives and capital markets. There is, moreover, a complementary relationship between progress in the equalization of opportunities in social services, education in particular, and sustainable livelihoods. Monitoring the implementation of equal protection provisions in these areas will be of critical importance. **The Ad Hoc Committee may wish to invite interested parties and experts to provide input**

related to progress in the development of international agreements on employment and livelihood indicators, such as labour force participation and unemployment rates for persons with disabilities. Data for these efforts would derive from monitoring both the implementation of International Labour Organization Convention 159 concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) and progress in implementing such global development instruments as the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the Doha Development Agenda. The Ad Hoc Committee may also wish to obtain input on progress made by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the implementation of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action and the Dakar Framework for Action, as well as its technical work on educational indicators, such as school enrolment, educational attainment and literacy rates for persons with disabilities and the non-disabled population. Information on new directions in school-to-work transition programmes would useful.

3. Progress in reinforcing the disability perspective in technical cooperation activities

12. Building national capacities is a main objective of technical cooperation activities of the United Nations system for development. The role of technical cooperation activities of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, in building national capacities for equalization of opportunities has been frequently cited in General Assembly resolutions concerning persons with disabilities, most recently in resolution 56/115. Mainstreaming the disability perspective in technical cooperation activities of the United Nations system remains, however, the exception. **To promote greater coherence, efficiency and sustainability in activities of the United Nations system aimed at building national capacities, the General Assembly may wish to consider identifying policy options and target areas that could be used by United Nations funds and programmes to incorporate the disability perspective in their activities, and to provide input to the Ad Hoc Committee.**

4. Progress in data and statistics on disability in mainstream development

13. There has been major progress in the development of concepts and methods of statistics on disability and in the compilation of data on disability, as defined by national statistical bodies or similar organizations. However, after 20 years of international cooperation to further the goals and objectives of the World Programme of Action, it still is not possible to present comparative data and statistics on the prevalence of disability globally, or on social and economic trends for persons with disabilities and the non-disabled. This is due to variations in "screens" employed to collect and organize data on disability from diverse national data collection sources. To address the challenge of greater comparability in national data on disability, the Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat prepared guidelines on the collection of data on disability as a recommended new topic for the round of population and housing censuses in 2000[4]. The recommendations noted that, owing to limitations of space in a census, focus should be on the disability dimension of the World Health Organization's International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps,[5] with the impairment and handicap dimensions to be covered by household survey data. The Statistics Division recently published *Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics*.[6]

which focuses on technical guidance for collecting, compiling and disseminating statistics on persons with disabilities. With the World Health Assembly's adoption in 2001 of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, the recommendations on the next series of population and housing censuses, scheduled to commence in 2005, will have an expanded conceptual and substantive basis. **The General Assembly may wish to provide guidance on the importance of urgent action to improve data and statistics on persons with disabilities so that they can be compared internationally for purposes of policy design, planning and evaluation from the disability perspective. The Assembly may wish to note, in this connection, the important contributions of the Washington Group on Disability Measurement of the Statistical Commission (see E/CN.3/2002/7). The Assembly may also wish to recommend options to incorporate national capacity-building to improve national census and household survey data from the disability perspective as a mainstream consideration in technical cooperation activities of the United Nations system.** With regard to equalization of opportunities and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of development, **the Assembly may wish to consider identifying priorities for action related to statistics and indicators, with top priority accorded to indicators for education and employment**.

5. Progress in improved planning and coordination of activities of the United Nations system to promote equalization of opportunities

14. The Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development has highlighted the importance of systematic exchanges of experiences and ideas between bodies and organizations of the United Nations and programmes in the disability field in each of his monitoring reports (see A/52/56, E/CN.5/2000/3 and E/CN.5/2002/4). He has recommended that the Programme on Disability of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as the focal point on disability of the United Nations Secretariat, use accessible Internet-based technologies, an area in which the Programme on Disability has undertaken a number of pilot efforts in countries, and establish a virtual inter-agency consultation mechanism. In response to that recommendation, the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has established a "United Nations system and persons with disabilities" home page (http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/unandpwd.htm) to provide in accessible format links to selected resources of the United Nations on global disability policies and programmes, and a companion "United Nations resources on disability available on-line" (http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/unpwdresources.htm#UNOtherResources) as a guide to resources among selected members of the United Nations system. Further progress to improve planning and coordination of activities of the United Nations system to promote equalization of opportunities would involve, at the technical level, a commitment to establish, on a pilot basis, a portal to promote an open dialogue among concerned members of the United Nations system as well as civil society. **The Assembly may wish to express its views with regard to options and priorities presented to strengthen joint planning and evaluation of outcomes of the activities of the system to promote the advancement of persons with disabilities in the context of development**.

Notes

[1] Resolution 48/96, annex.

[2] Geneva, World Health Organization, 2001.

[3] Rules 5-12 deal, respectively, with accessibility; education; employment; income maintenance and social security; family life and personal integrity; culture; recreation and sports; and religion.

[4] United Nations Secretariat, *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* (ST/ESA/SER.M/67/Rev.1), paras. 2.258-2.277.

[5] Geneva, World Health Organization, 1980; this classification was used prior to the adoption by the World Health Assembly in 2001 of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health.

[6] ST/ESA/STAT/SER.Y/10 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.XVII.15).

Annex

Overview of recent policy and programme activities

I. Introduction

1. General Assembly resolution 56/115 of 19 December 2001 called upon Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to promote international norms and standards relating to persons with disabilities, undertake public information campaigns and direct special attention to specific populations of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, girls and women with disabilities and people with developmental and psychiatric disabilities. Thirty-two Governments and several intergovernmental and United Nations system organizations submitted reports on action taken to implement Assembly resolution 56/115.[a]

II. Activities of Governments

2. Operative paragraph 4 of resolution 56/115 encourages Governments to take concrete measures to further the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities "by focusing on accessibility, health, education, social services, ... safety nets, employment and sustainable livelihoods".

A. Accessibility

3. Many Governments reported that the removal of physical barriers and the creation of non-handicapping environments is a major element of national plans, policies and legislation. Several Governments enacted legislation and adopted technical standards on accessibility to buildings, public facilities and transportation services. These include China, which established a design code and technical standards on accessibility; Cyprus, which amended its Street and Building Regulations Law to remove physical barriers in public roads and facilities; Finland, which issued in 2001 national land-use guidelines and an Act on Passenger Transport; Greece, which uses its general construction regulation to improve accessibility to public transport; Malta and the Netherlands, which use their respective equal opportunity acts to promote accessibility for all; Mexico, which adopted in 2001 the Institutional Programme for Accessibility of Public Buildings and Infrastructure, which includes recommendations on accessibility and barrier-free facilities, as does the Accessibility Law of the Philippines; Maldives, which includes references to accessibility and persons with disabilities in building codes and regulations; Senegal, which is incorporating disability and accessibility considerations in revisions to urban planning codes; and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which extended the right to public transport in its Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 (Chapter 50).

4. Some Governments use the budget to promote accessible environments. The 2000 budget law of Italy provides financing for non-profit organizations to plan buildings for persons with disabilities. Other Governments prepare plans and targets to promote accessibility: Hungary targeted improving accessibility in public

buildings, with emphasis on health care, education and training, and social services; Norway set targets for the period 2005-2012 to provide total access to buildings and public spaces, information and communication services, and public transport; technical requirements in Slovakia and the National Action Plan for disability policy in Sweden aim to increase accessibility in public buildings and spaces. Several Governments organized public information campaigns: Kenya used information campaigns combined with regulation to promote disability-friendly buildings and public facilities; Pakistan directs special attention to the design of accessible buildings and spaces in the public and private sectors; and in Switzerland a popular initiative on equal rights for disabled persons and a governmental bill now in process aim to guarantee access to buildings, public transportation and housing.

5. Efforts to promote accessible information and communication technologies involve training national personnel, financial support, enacting legislation and drafting technical standards. Action to promote accessibility in alternative communications by Hungary includes support for the provision and training of sign-language interpreters. Trinidad and Tobago includes sign-language interpretation in daily news telecasts, and Portugal initiated Teletext services for people with visual impairments. In Spain, Public Laws 15 and 34 of July 2001 include measures to eliminate barriers in audio-visual products and the Internet. In connection with programmes established by Poland to support higher education, the Pegasus Programme makes it possible for persons with disabilities to obtain interest-free loans to purchase, inter alia, computer equipment. Thailand established an Information Technology Subcommittee for Persons with Disabilities in 1999 and is collaborating with the Government of Japan to establish in Bangkok the Asia-Pacific Development Centre on Disability, scheduled to open in 2004.

B. Health and social services

6. Governments reported on a range of health and social services, with special emphasis on preventing disabling conditions, promoting inclusive education, rehabilitation and initiatives to support independent living for persons with disabilities. Government policy in Cyprus, Jordan and the Philippines focuses on the provision of social and medical rehabilitation and care; the focus in Hungary is on medical treatment and research in support of rehabilitation, prevention and the social integration of persons with disabilities. The Primary Health Care Act of Finland focuses on preventive measures, including health education and medical and vocational rehabilitation. The National Programme of Health 2001-2006 of Mexico focuses on the development of prevention and rehabilitation and initiated a national disability registry. Senegal is developing a national programme on community-based rehabilitation. Pakistan provides medical care for persons with disabilities and initiated action to eradicate polio. In the United States of America, Supreme Court decision *Olmstead vs. L.C. (98-536)* found that the unnecessary segregation of individuals with disabilities in institutions may constitute discrimination based on disability, and ruled that the Americans with Disabilities Act (PL 101-336) may require government agencies to provide community-based services for individuals with disabilities rather than place them in institutions.

7. Many Governments provided information on measures to prevent disabling conditions. Cambodia incorporated prevention strategies into its primary health policies and programmes and is developing rehabilitation services in collaboration

with the non-governmental community. Prevention and treatment of persons with mental disabilities are being addressed in 551 counties in China. Policies of both Italy and Norway focus on the prevention of disabling conditions, diagnosis and education; Italy provides support for families with severely disabled members. Maldives is conducting a public awareness programme on iodine deficiency and has initiated programmes to provide vitamin A supplements to children. Prevention measures in Thailand include the establishment of community health-care centres and programmes of immunization against polio, rubella (German measles), tetanus and meningitis.

8. Many Governments reported on measures to provide services to enable persons with disabilities to live as independently as possible in their communities; these include policy initiatives on income maintenance and safety nets, and specific programmes and institutions. Switzerland revised federal legislation on disability insurance to improve opportunities for independent living for persons with disabilities; the disability pension programme in Sweden will be changed in January 2003 to promote the independence of persons with disabilities; and monthly pension plans in Brazil provide benefits to persons with disabilities who are unable to work or are living in poverty. Rehabilitation services in Spain are based on a constitutional mandate and include medical rehabilitation, health and social services, and ancillary benefits for persons with disabilities. Finland initiated an assistive technology project to improve staff training and develop new models of health and social services. The Centres for Recovery and Physical and Social Rehabilitation of Greece provide rehabilitation services and promote social inclusion and independent living for persons with disabilities. Assisted living services in Malta have moved from large-scale institutions to small-scale day centres for persons with intellectual disabilities. The Republic of Moldova established the National Scientific-Practical Centre of Neurology and Neurosurgery in 2001 to support independent living for persons with disabilities. Maldives provides assistive devices and financial support for financially disadvantaged persons with disabilities. Since 1999, Slovakia has been providing social care and financial assistance for citizens with serious disabilities.

C. Employment and sustainable livelihoods

9. A basic trend among reporting Governments is the integration of persons with disabilities into regular labour markets, which is implemented through vocational training and quotas on the supply side, and the provision of financial and tax incentives to employers of persons with disabilities on the demand side. Brazil, the Republic of Moldova and Pakistan established quotas of 2 to 5 per cent for employment of persons with disabilities in regular labour markets. National legislation in Cyprus (Law on Disabled Persons (2000)), Italy (Law 68 of 1999) and Greece (Law 2643/98) promote the employment of and provide protection for persons with disabilities in labour markets. Hungary enacted provisions to protect persons with disabilities from discrimination and to remove obstacles to their employment; Malta encourages employers to provide placements for employees who become disabled; and the Netherlands Parliament adopted legislation in 2002 on the employment of persons with disabilities. Mexico is increasing environmental accessibility, identifying employment opportunities and promoting the integration of persons with disabilities into regular labour markets. Vocational rehabilitation

policies in Norway are combined with measures to promote equal opportunities for employment for persons with disabilities, including supported placements and work at home.

10. Several Governments discussed the role of financial assistance and incentives in promoting the employment of persons with disabilities. China adopted policies to reduce taxes for enterprises that employ persons with disabilities. Portugal, Spain and Thailand enacted policies, legislation and programmes to promote the integration of persons with disabilities into the workforce through financial incentives for employers. Starting in 2003 Sweden will provide financial benefits for improvements in rehabilitation and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. By 2004 the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland plans to extend coverage under the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 (Chapter 50) to small-sized firms, law enforcement and other areas where employment opportunities have traditionally been limited for persons with disabilities. In Poland the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons provides financing to targeted programmes addressed to persons with disabilities and employers, organizations and institutions working on their behalf.

11. To enable persons with disabilities to obtain gainful employment and exercise their human rights, the Governments of Cambodia, China, Hungary, Kenya, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand have established training and rehabilitation centres or employment-related programmes. Both Finland and Hungary promote regular employment through rehabilitation and vocational training. The Worker Training Scholarship Programme of Mexico supports training for persons with disabilities who are unemployed through incentive-oriented quotas or reserved employment. Local non-governmental organizations in Maldives conduct training in basic computer skills for persons with disabilities. In 2000 the Philippines began a programme for people with disabilities to gain access to regular employment and training opportunities, from which an estimated 18,500 persons have benefited to date. Thailand established in 1998 an independent living training programme at the Sirindhorn National Medical Rehabilitation Centre and observed in 2002 the Year of Employment Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities.

D. Promoting inclusive societies

12. Governmental efforts to promote inclusive societies take such forms as the creation of national plans or programmes having a strong governmental involvement, the commissioning of independent studies and the establishment of centralized bodies or coordinating mechanisms. Many commented on the contribution of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in the formulation and evaluation of policies and plans. Cyprus established the Rehabilitation Council in the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, the central body for disability issues. Disability policy and legislation in Finland focus on promoting independent living and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities; the State Council on Disability is an advisory body for ministries and public institutions. Hungary established a consultative body of Government pursuant to Act XXVI of 1998, on the rights of and equal opportunities for disabled persons. The National Council for Protection of Persons with Disabilities of Jordan, established under the Special Law for Disability Protection (Law 12 of 1993), provides protection and training programmes for persons with disabilities and

supports private-sector and non-governmental organizations. In 2001 Mexico created, in the President's Office, the Cabinet-level Office for the Promotion and Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities and established the Consultative Council for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities to mainstream decision-making and coordinate public policies on disability. Norway provides follow-up on disability policies and aims to strengthen inter-ministerial cooperation on the Government's Plan of Action for people with disabilities. In Trinidad and Tobago the National Coordinating Committee on Disability advises the Government on matters related to disability. In 1999, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland established the Independent Disability Rights Task Force, which published "From exclusion to inclusion", a basis for policy and programme initiatives.

13. Non-discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities are the principal focus in legislative initiatives reported by Governments, including the equal opportunity acts adopted by Malta and Trinidad and Tobago, which protect persons from discrimination on the basis of disability; an amendment to the Constitution of Switzerland eliminates discrimination on the basis of disability. Kenya is reviewing its Constitution to ensure that disability issues are presented appropriately; and general legislation is being drafted by Senegal on medical rehabilitation, education, training and employment for the disabled. The 1997 Constitution of Thailand includes specific provisions for persons with disabilities and eliminated restrictions on the exercise of their rights. The Americans with Disabilities Act (PL 101-336) of the United States of America aims to eliminate barriers to the participation of persons with disabilities in social and economic life; the New Freedom Initiative (2001) of the United States is part of nationwide efforts to remove barriers to community living for people with disabilities.

14. Other efforts involving strategies, plans and programmes to further social integration include, in Lithuania, the National Programme on the Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities for 2003-2012; in Portugal, the National Plan for Equality; in the Republic of Moldova, the National Programme of Rehabilitation and Social Protection for and Integration of the Disabled, 2000-2005; in the Philippines, the Plan of Action, 1993-2002; and in Spain, the Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities (1997-2002). Brazil has introduced laws and programmes on social inclusion over the past three years, focusing on (a) integration into the public sector (Federal Edict No. 3298/1999; Multi-year Plan 2000-2003) and (b) establishing norms for the promotion and protection of the fundamental human rights of all Brazilians (National Programme for Human Rights). Programmes in Thailand incorporate the disability perspective. with emphasis on education, employment, rehabilitation and medical services. The Russian Federation targeted the following areas for policy development: strengthening the role of the State in medical and social services; supporting the production of technical devices for rehabilitation and upgrading disability analysis and information systems at the State level; and supporting organizations of persons with disabilities, including support for the formation of unions at all levels of society. In 2001, Slovakia approved a system-oriented approach to improving the living conditions of persons with disabilities. In 2000, to promote social inclusion, Sweden ratified the bills on a national action plan for disability policy, and on the Social Services Act and the Education Act.

15. Both China and Maldives formulated national strategies to target persons with disabilities who have special needs. Under its Ninth (1996-2000) and Tenth (2001-

2005) Five-Year Plans, China promoted work for persons with disabilities in line with national economic and social development planning.

E. Public information campaigns

16. Governments reported that public awareness activities range from a single day's observance, such as 3 December, the International Day of Disabled Persons, to the proclamation of a special year or a decade. Italy and Mexico launched in 2002 an awareness-raising campaign on the rights of persons with disabilities and obligations related to employment. Poland plans to organize a series of national events during the 2003 observance of the European Year of People with Disabilities. Observance of the Day in Thailand included recognition of the efforts of companies to promote employment for persons with disabilities. Theme-specific campaigns include public information activities in Cambodia focusing on accessibility, while Portugal and Slovakia focus on equal rights, employability and the social integration of persons with disabilities. The non-governmental community cooperated with information campaigns in Cambodia, Pakistan and Maldives. In Norway, information policies aimed at ensuring access for every resident and enterprise to information on public sector activities and participation in the democratic process.

F. Education

17. Government reports indicate the trend towards equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities in mainstream educational systems. Governments reporting on specific legislation on integrating children with disabilities into mainstream education include Cyprus (Law 113(I) 99 on Special Education), Finland (Basic Education Act), Hungary (Act on Equal Opportunities), Slovakia (New University Act (2001)) and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001). In Malta, the Ministerial Committee addressed children's special educational needs, which resulted in the establishment of a system for including parental views. Both Mexico and Norway have reported on policy-level commitments to integrate children and youth with disabilities into the educational mainstream. China directs special attention to integrating students with visual or auditory impairments and strengthening the management of special education schools. Kenya established educational assessment centres in each district to ensure the placement of children with disabilities in an appropriate educational institution. The National Institute of Special Education in Pakistan has developed a uniform policy on admission, placement, curriculum development and evaluation. The Russian Federation has taken specific actions to provide formal education and to integrate children with disabilities into the general school system. The Year of Education for Persons with Disabilities in Thailand in 1999 prompted general schools to provide facilities for persons with disabilities.

18. The accommodation of students with special needs in mainstream education may involve training special education instructors and orientation for students with disabilities. Hungary provides special education mainly through the National Institute of Vocational Training, which trains teachers and vocational trainers. The Ministry of Culture and Development of Jordan provides schools for children with visual, hearing and physical disabilities with education and training specialists; both governmental and private-sector centres have developed resources to train and

educate persons with mental disabilities. Pakistan developed a programme to train special education teachers. In Spain, practical training in the private sector and programmes of transition are promoting the social integration of persons with disabilities.

19. Some Governments reported on the role of financial assistance in supporting education for persons with disabilities. In Italy Law 69 of March 2000 increased financial allocations to the School Integration Fund for 2000 and 2001. Senegal introduced a bill to provide scholarships and reduced administrative fees for students with disabilities who are in need. The National Education Act (1999) of Thailand entitles students with disabilities to 12 years of basic education at no charge.

20. To accommodate the alternative communication needs of deaf persons, Governments reported on efforts to promote a national sign language. Brazil's Public Law No. 10.436 of 2002 made Brazilian sign language an official language. The Constitution of Portugal protects and validates Portuguese sign language as a form of cultural expression and an educational instrument for persons with disabilities. A Thai national sign language was adopted.

G. Activities of intergovernmental organizations, other entities and the United Nations system

21. Regional intergovernmental organizations and the regional commissions of the United Nations undertook a number of actions to promote awareness and build capacities for the full participation and equality of persons with disabilities. Member States of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) proclaimed in May 2002 the Second Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons.[b] The African Union proclaimed 2000-2009 the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities to promote the full participation, equality and empowerment of people with disabilities in Africa. The Arab Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012, has commenced following decisions taken at the twenty-first session of the Council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs of the League of Arab States. The Council of the European Union proclaimed 2003 the European Year of People with Disabilities to highlight the barriers and discrimination that persons with disabilities face and to improve the lives of those who have a disability.

22. The International Committee of the Red Cross will focus during the period 2000-2005 on (a) developing project guidelines for treatment of amputees, (b) defining a standard level of training and developing a training package for national personnel and (c) improving and standardizing affordable raw materials, including prosthetic components.

23. Activities of the United Nations system to promote the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities included action to build national capacities; further development of methodologies for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data on disability; support to improve the educational outcomes of persons with disabilities; promoting accessible information and communication technologies; training persons with disabilities for regular employment and sustainable livelihoods; and promoting strategies, policies and programmes to eliminate barriers to the participation of persons with disabilities in the mainstream. The Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat continued the development

of a web site to disseminate data and statistics on disability (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/disability/), published *Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics*[c] and organized regional training workshops on disability statistics. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development, examined measures to strengthen the protection and monitoring of the human rights of persons with disabilities. OHCHR drafted a long-term plan for integrating the disability perspective into the activities of treaty monitoring bodies. Accessibility to the United Nations Secretariat is addressed in the report of the Secretary-General on the capital master plan (A/57/285); interim renovations focus on wheelchair accessibility and signage and lighting for restrooms, elevators and public areas; the public tour route at Headquarters is now accessible to persons with disabilities. The Department of Public Information and its network of United Nations information centres and information services provided media outreach on work of the United Nations related to persons with disabilities. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean collaborated with countries on the design of the round of population and housing censuses for 2000, which included recommendations on the collection of data on disability. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) focused on promoting self-reliance and employment of persons with disabilities, directing special attention to Braille computer training and community-based rehabilitation. The expert meeting on disability measurement for ESCWA countries (Cairo, 1-5 June 2002) noted the need to improve the quality of regional disability data, making appropriate use of the World Health Organization (WHO) International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health[d] and building on substantive contributions of the Washington Group on Disability Measurement. ESCAP directed special attention to self-help initiatives of persons with disabilities, relating to, inter alia, accessible environments, public transport and services, and strengthening the capacities of self-help organizations and organizations of women with disabilities. ESCAP supports the development of national disability legislation and awareness-raising measures, with special emphasis on the digital divide affecting persons with disabilities. The high-level intergovernmental meeting that marked the conclusion of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002 (Otsu, Shiga, Japan, 25-28 October 2002) adopted the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action Disability to guide action towards an inclusive, barrier-free, rights-based society for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

24. The question of children with disabilities is identified as priority in General Assembly resolution 56/115. Actions of the United Nations Children's Fund to prevent childhood disability include addressing vitamin A and iodine deficiency disorders, providing polio vaccinations, preventing measles and eliminating guinea worm. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) focuses on the integration of refugee children and adolescents with disabilities into mainstream society through inclusive education and community-based rehabilitation. UNHCR issued guidelines on disability and produced an "Action for the rights of children" resource pack. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) promotes the human rights of Palestinian refugees with disabilities through skills development and integration into the community. UNRWA staff training includes improving curriculum, school buildings and equipment and educational outcomes of children with disabilities.

25. The International Labour Organization (ILO) contributed to the equalization of opportunities in the areas of vocational training and employment promotion, and translated the ILO Code of Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace (2001) into 10 languages. Activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations focus on improving income-generating capacities, providing emergency assistance to reintegrate war-disabled persons and other persons with disabilities and continued development of the web site for its database on the rural disabled (http://www.fao.org/sd/ppdirect/rurald/). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization strengthened capacities for inclusive education in terms of the production of technical materials for training staff and educational professionals, literacy training using Braille, developing national sign languages and related systems for alternative communication, and organizing subregional workshops for teacher training in special education. Activities of WHO focus on preventing causes of disability, supporting community-based rehabilitation, and promoting social inclusion and equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. In 2001 WHO published the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health. The observance of World Health Day (7 April) in 2001 focused on promoting and protecting the rights of people with mental disabilities. The World Bank addresses disability issues in its lending operations to support the development of inclusive community-based programmes, provide social investment funds and support research on policies and strategies for the education and social integration of persons with disabilities. The International Civil Aviation Organization developed international Standards and Recommended Practices on access to air services and airport facilities for elderly persons and persons with disabilities; the latest recommended practice is included in the tenth edition of annex 9 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation. The International Telecommunication Union aims to ensure that people with disabilities have access to innovative new technologies and is currently investigating improvements to achieve greater accessibility.

H. Activities of non-governmental organizations

26. General Assembly resolution 56/115 envisages the active participation of the non-governmental community, in cooperation with Governments, to further the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. The International Disability Alliance is a network of seven international non-governmental disability organizations: Disabled People's International, Inclusion International, Rehabilitation International, the World Blind Union, the World Federation of the Deaf, the World Federation of the Deaf-Blind and the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry. Activities of the Alliance include (a) lobbying United Nations bodies and agencies on common issues and concerns and (b) strengthening the voices of persons with disabilities in international forums and networks of disability organizations. The Sixth World Assembly of Disabled People's International (Sapporo, Japan, 15-18 October 2002) adopted the Sapporo Declaration and Sapporo Platform on the rights of persons with disabilities. Inclusion International is an advocate for equal rights for persons with intellectual disabilities. In Romania, Inclusion International and its members contributed to the drafting of the National Disability Policy, drawing upon the Standard Rules. Rehabilitation International, a worldwide network of people with disabilities, service providers and governmental agencies working to improve quality of life for

disabled people and their families, collaborated with regional initiatives including the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons and the African Decade of Disabled Persons, and promoted the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities of the Organization of American States. The World Blind Union, which works to achieve the full participation of blind and partially sighted persons, cooperated with the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness and the "Vision 2020: the right to sight" initiative of WHO, and with ILO in determining the unemployment rate among blind and partially sighted people. Its work also dealt with the protection of the rights of the blind in armed conflicts; education; and the right to Braille as a written language. The World Federation of the Deaf participated in a number of recent United Nations activities concerning the rights of children with disabilities and their education, as well as activities to support the Asian and African Decades. National and regional secretariats of the World Federation coordinated and attended a number of seminars, such as the first South American Regional Interpreter Training Seminar (Uruguay, November 2001), the first Latin American Deaf Women's Seminar (Cuba, May 2002) and the African Sign Language Seminar (United Republic of Tanzania). Issues of concern for the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry include the right to rehabilitation; legal reforms addressing self-determination and autonomy; legal protection and international instruments; poverty and social exclusion; lack of financial and other support; housing; involuntary confinement or detention; and the use of punitive and restrictive law instead of treatment.

Notes

[a] Brazil, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Lithuania, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Maldives, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America submitted replies to note verbale DESA/DIS02/3 of 24 September 2004.

[b] See ESCAP resolution 58/4 of 22 May 2002, "Promoting an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for people with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific region in the twenty-first century".

[c] ST/ESA/STAT/SER.Y/10 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.XVII.15).

[d] Geneva, World Health Organization, 2001.